



Newsletter of The Pendleton Bird Club

# Kákya Táymut

KUK-yuh TIE-moot, Umatilla Indian Translation: *Bird News*



Volume 10, No. 1 Pendleton, Oregon January 2012

## Bird Club Recognized at Statue Dedication

**O**N MONDAY, DECEMBER 26TH, 2011, the City of Pendleton officially dedicated the new Great Blue Heron statue located along the River Walk at the city's newest park at Court Ave. and SW 5th Street. Bird Club members will recall last spring when the city asked citizens to vote for the type of statue that should be placed in the park. Rallying to the cause, bird club members voted overwhelmingly for the sculpture of a native bird to be placed at the site. By last summer, with backing by the River Quarter Committee and the Pendleton Arts Committee, the Great Blue Heron was selected to grace the River Walk at the new park. In early September, just before the start of the Pendleton Round-Up, the statue was erected on its massive granite pedestal, and is now a permanent fixture in the park.

The statue, "Courting Blue Herons" by sculptor Michael Maiden, is an exquisite rendition of a bird that is not only frequently seen along the River Walk but has established a rookery across the river from the Little League baseball fields located near the eastern end of



Phil Houk presided over the dedication ceremony, which was attended by over 30 people on a bright, sunny morning. A bronze dedication plaque recently

Pendleton. Very few cities in Oregon can boast of a heron rookery within their city limits. Mayor

had been installed at the site to commemorate the statue, the sculptor, and the primary people and organizations responsible for acquiring the statue for the citizens of Pendleton. The plaque lists five organizations that contributed to the establishment of the statue and pedestal, including: Pendleton Foundation Trust, The



*Great Blue Heron sculpture on the River Walk at the new park. Photo by Diana LaSarge.*

Wildhorse Foundation, River Quarter Committee, Pendleton Arts Committee and Pendleton Bird Club. Given the rather informal nature of our Club, it is an honor to be included in the "Special Thanks to:" list of organizations that helped to make the statue a reality. Thank you Bird Club members for voting your desire to have the native Great Blue Heron represent the river ecosystem that makes Pendleton a special place to live and thrive!

*By Jack Simons and Aaron Skirvin*

## **“Humungous Challenge” Disrupts Winter’s Boredom!**

### **Calendar of Events**

#### **Bird Club Meeting**

7:00 p.m., Thursday, February 9, 2012

#### **ON SAFARI IN KENYA & TANZANIA**

By Dave Herr

Location to be announced

#### **Work Party for Wanaket Burrowing Owl Project**

9:00 a.m., Saturday, February 25, 2012

#### **Work Party to Install Artificial Burrows for Burrowing Owls**

Volunteers needed to help install new artificial burrows at Wanaket Wildlife Area.

Contact Tanya Harrison at 541-429-7254  
or [TanyaHarrison@ctuir.org](mailto:TanyaHarrison@ctuir.org)

#### **Bird Club Meeting**

7:00 p.m., Thursday, March 8, 2012

#### **WILDLIFE REHABILITATION**

By Lynn Tompkins

Location to be Announced

**J**ANUARY 12 WAS THE CLUB’S first potluck dinner meeting of 2012. Thirty-four enthusiastic members met at the First Presbyterian Church (FPC), 201 S.W. Dorion Avenue, a very accommodating setting with a large, spacious room and audio/visual amenities. There was a wonderful selection of food, including deserts (but short on fresh fruits/veggies – shame on us!). To quote Aaron Skirvin, “Birders make good cooks.”

Jack Simons introduced a new format for the Fourth Annual Humungous ID Challenge by handing out “test papers” with 75 questions! His slide show presentation was very informative with bird anatomy, silhouettes, collective nouns, and puzzling and obscure pictures. Jack advised us to check out the web site from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology (<http://www.allaboutbirds.org>) to learn more intriguing facts about our feathered friends. New birders, do not be discouraged, this was a very difficult game! Good job Jack – we all appreciate the work you put into this each year – thank you!

Announcements included Aaron’s report on the Christmas Bird Count, commenting on the weather that was less than conducive to the event and feeling good that we still managed to see 64 different species. Aaron also gave a report on the PBC’s “Big Day” held January 1<sup>st</sup> that tallied 88 species, possibly a club record for the event.



There was some discussion about whether or not the PBC should continue to meet at the First Christian Church (FCC), 215 N. Main St, a cozy setting with easy parking access and intimate aesthetics, with only the large meetings to be held at the FPC or to hold all the meetings at FPC. After a few questions and comments, a vote was taken. As is fitting for an election year, it was non-decisive and Aaron declared it a “primary vote” with only 19 of the 34 attendees voting.

Tanya Harrison gave information and sign-up sheets for a Burrowing Owl work party to be held February 25 at the Wanaket Wildlife Area. Volunteers should bring shovels, gloves and snacks and meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Box Canyon entrance to Wanaket. Lunch



will be provided. Contact Tanya Harrison at [TanyaHarrison@ctuir.org](mailto:TanyaHarrison@ctuir.org) for more information about the Burrowing Owl project at Wanaket.

Aaron announced that the next meeting is Thursday, February 9<sup>th</sup> featuring Dave Herr's "Birding Safari in Kenya and Tanzania." As of this writing, it will be held at FCC at 7:00 p.m. Hope to see you there!

*By George Ruby and Marilyn Cripe*

## 2011 UMATILLA COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

**WE HELD OUR 2011** Christmas bird count on Friday, December 30, 2011. Umatilla County's count was part of the nationwide 112<sup>th</sup> annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) sponsored by the National Audubon Society. The goal of our count is to find, identify, and count as many birds as possible in a 24-hour period within a count circle 15 miles in diameter. The center of Umatilla County's count circle is located near the base of Cabbage Hill about seven miles southeast of Pendleton.

Seventeen bird counters, including 3 feeder watchers, tallied **64** species of birds on count day, which is lower than the average of 70 – 72 species we usually find during the count. The highest count since we began the Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count in 1987 was 84 species on January 1, 2005. The lowest count was 49 species on January 1, 2000. This year's count produced a low total number of birds, too, just 6,697 birds counted. Usually, we find over 8,000 individual birds on a typical count. Dry, warm conditions for the previous month caused the birds to scatter widely over the count area, and the drizzly, windy weather on count day kept counters close to the cars and birds huddled in the brush – out of sight!!

By comparison, last year's count on January 2, 2011, was an average count, when we found 69 species and tallied 8,580 individual birds in the count circle. Rules for the CBC allow the addition of species found during "count week" — three days immediately prior to and three days after count day. This year, three additional species, Ruddy Duck, Say's Phoebe, and Pacific (Winter) Wren, were seen within the count circle during count week but not on count day.

This year's highlights included a record high count of 8 Barn Owls. Previous high counts were 3 owls on

January 2, 1988 and December 31, 1994. Barn Owl numbers have been high in the area since the fall of 2010 because of the persistent high population of mice and voles that they prey upon. In addition, last spring and summer the adult owls produced lots of young owls. We also had a record high count of 88 American Kestrels, another species that has taken advantage of the high rodent numbers for the past year. The previous high count was 79 kestrels on December 31, 2005.

Participants on this year's count were: Angela Baylink, Dave Corbet, Marilyn Cripe, Katrina Dielman, Carolyn Featherston, Colleen Hewes, Neal Hinds, Tanya Harrison, Diana LaSarge, Bruce Mayfield, Dolly Robison, George Ruby, Jack Simons, Aaron Skirvin, Lorna Waltz, Duane Whitten, and June Whitten. A sincere thank you to all for making the time to help count birds.

**Results of the count are as follows:** Canada Goose 1027, Cackling Goose 2, American Wigeon 27, Mallard 86, Green-winged Teal 27, Ring-necked Duck 7, Lesser Scaup 112, Common Goldeneye 9, Hooded Merganser 8, Common Merganser 10, Ruddy Duck (count week), Ring-necked Pheasant 163, Gray Partridge 20, Wild Turkey 60, California Quail 90, Great Blue Heron 14, Black-crowned Night-Heron 1, Bald Eagle 7 (6 adults and 1 immatures), Northern Harrier 49, Sharp-shinned Hawk 5, Cooper's Hawk 2, *Accipiter* species 1, Red-tailed Hawk 94, Rough-legged Hawk 7, *Buteo* sp. 8, Golden Eagle 1 (adult), American Kestrel 88, Prairie Falcon 5, American Coot 22, Ring-billed Gull 7, Rock Pigeon 228, Mourning Dove 140, Eurasian Collared-Dove 66, Barn Owl 8, Great Horned Owl 4, Belted Kingfisher 3, Downy Woodpecker 1, Hairy Woodpecker 1, Northern Flicker 44, Pileated Woodpecker 1, Say's Phoebe (count week), Northern Shrike 2, Black-billed Magpie 400, American Crow 10, Common Raven 22, Horned Lark 70, Black-capped Chickadee 15, Bewick's Wren 13, Winter Wren (count week), Golden-crowned Kinglet 10, Ruby-crowned Kinglet 8, Townsend's Solitaire 3, American Robin 3, Bohemian Waxwing 16, European Starling 1935, Yellow-rumped Warbler 1, Song Sparrow 59, Lincoln's Sparrow 1, White-crowned Sparrow 357, Dark-eyed Junco 275, Red-winged Blackbird 447, Western Meadowlark 97, Brewer's Blackbird 1, Cassin's Finch 4, House Finch 133, Common Redpoll 1, American Goldfinch 51, House Sparrow 246.

*By Aaron Skirvin*





## *A Magical Moment*

**O**N A LONG, DARK WINTER'S evening I sat reminiscing about the various Oregon birding excursions that I was able to do this year. I asked myself which was the one moment that I thought was truly the most special. Was it the time that Aaron Skirvin and I were driving around the Horn of Battle Mountain in a gusty 40-mile an hour head wind and a Sabine's Gull flew up in front of the car because it had taken a brief respite from migration to eat bugs along the shoulder of the road? Was it the cute baby Clark's Grebes riding on their mommas' backs at The Narrows of Malheur National Wildlife Area? No, I think the most special moment occurred to me when Aaron Skirvin and I were stopped in the pine forest near Phillip's Lake outside of Sumpter in early October.



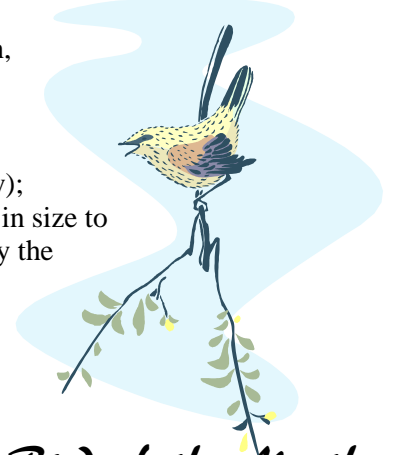
We had stopped at a parking area and began to walk along the road through the forest. Suddenly, a cloud of colorful, busy little birds surrounded us like a mob of fairies. There were Junco's, Western Bluebirds, Cassin's Finches, White-breasted Nuthatches, Pygmy Nuthatches, Red-breasted Nuthatches, a Hairy Woodpecker, Chipping Sparrows, Mountain Chickadees, Pine Siskins and Yellow-rumped Warblers. They passed by and over us, hung upside down on the trees beside us, hopped and chirped all around us. We were no longer considered a predator, but were ignored because the business of gathering food was more important. Aaron called it a "mixed foraging flock", but I called it "magical." It seemed to be the moment that decided for me that I wanted to learn more about birds and be a bird watcher, or "birder".

I hope to pass along what I am learning about birding to my grandchildren; get them involved in learning and caring about nature and the wonderful things around us. I hope all of you will consider this year to do the same. Let's get the next generations involved in birding and help them to discover their magical moments.

*By Diana LaSarge*

## **Bird of the Month – Prairie Falcon** *(Falco mexicanus)*

**U**MATILLA COUNTY IS FORTUNATE to be home to five of the six North American falcons. Only the Aplomado Falcon does not occur regularly in any state but Texas. The smallest and by far the most plentiful in Umatilla County is the American Kestrel; next in size is the Merlin, which is uncommon, locally; the speedy Peregrine Falcon (very uncommon in the county); Prairie Falcon is similar in size to the Peregrine; and finally the Gyrfalcon, which is the largest falcon and extremely rare in Umatilla County, with only a few documented sightings.



### *Bird of the Month*

Both the Prairie and the Peregrine Falcons average about 16 inches in length and weigh just over a pound and a half. They are usually found in different habitats and that may be the first clue in identifying these falcons. The Prairie Falcon is a bird of the



*Prairie Falcon at rest. Photo by Gerrit Vyn.*

grasslands and open spaces of Umatilla County, while the Peregrine is most apt to be near ponds, reservoirs, and rivers.

Habitat alone, of course, will not identify a Prairie Falcon. It is a warm gray-brown above and pale below with some dark mottling. The "moustache" mark is much narrower and less pronounced than the



Peregrine Falcon's, and the Prairie has a white eye-line. The most definitive field mark for the Prairie Falcon is its blackish axillars (the wingpits) that show very well in flight but are lacking in the Peregrine.

The Prairie Falcon eats mostly small mammals and some birds caught in flight. It usually hunts by flying fast and low, often only a meter or so from the ground, hoping to surprise its prey. Its cruising speed is about 45 mph, and it can accelerate in a chase. It also pursues prey from a perch, usually catching birds in a level flight.



*Prairie Falcon showing black "wingpits," an identifying characteristic. Photo from the 'BirdsofOklahoma.net' website.*

Prairie Falcons nest on cliff ledges or in rock crevices, making only a scrape on the ledge, with no nesting material added. The clutch averages 4 pinkish eggs, spotted with darker browns and reds. The female does most of the incubating for about 31 days, and the male provides food for her. Even after the chicks are hatched, the female does not hunt until they are about 2 weeks old. The young fledge at 5 or 6 weeks and remain with the parents a short time until their hunting techniques are advanced enough to survive on their own.

While the Aplomado and Peregrine Falcons were nearly annihilated by the use of DDT in the 1950's and 60's, the Prairie Falcon was not as drastically affected. Some reduced falcon populations recovered more quickly than others after the pesticide's use was banned in the United States in 1972. The habitat and food sources of the falcons were no doubt factors in population recovery.

Prairie Falcons have often been trained in falconry. Although considered rather hard to train and unpredictable, it is the most popular trained falcon in the United States. This is partly due to its abundance and relative ease to acquire. Also, Prairie Falcons are extremely aggressive, a characteristic much sought after by falconers.

Prairie Falcon is a North American bird, found mainly west of the Mississippi River and into Mexico and Central America. They are usually found in the open grasslands and Blue Mountain foothills in Umatilla County. Fall and winter are good seasons to observe Prairie Falcons, as they do not migrate but do stay in lower elevations in cold weather. The best places to look for them are in the southern part of Umatilla County (Pilot Rock, Vinson, and Ukiah), Juniper Canyon-Vancycle Canyon-Umapine area, Stage Gulch and Despain Gulch roads, and the Umatilla Indian Reservation east and south of Mission.

*By June Whitten*

Some of the information from this article was obtained from:

[http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Prairie\\_Falcon/ac](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Prairie_Falcon/ac)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prairie\\_Falcon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prairie_Falcon)

## 4th Annual Umatilla County Winter "Big Day"

**T**HE PENDLETON BIRD CLUB has started an annual tradition on New Year's Day. It's the annual Umatilla County Winter Big Day. The purpose of the event is to encourage birders to have a fun day looking for bird species in mid-winter in Umatilla County and find as many species as possible in the 24-hour period. This event is not to be confused with the Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count, which is sponsored by the National Audubon Society and tallies only those birds observed in the 15-mile diameter circle located near Pendleton (see the results of the Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count in a



separate article in this newsletter). The Winter Big Day covers all of Umatilla County, and we tally only species, not the number of each species.

The Big Day held on January 1, 2012, was our 4<sup>th</sup> annual event, and we had a good turnout. **Nancy and Lyle Brown** looked for birds in Hermiston and at McNary Wildlife Nature Area. **Colleen Hewes** birded in the area just SE of Pendleton, while **Neal Hinds** worked the Columbia River between Hat Rock State Park and McNary Wildlife Nature Area. **George and Leanne Ruby** found birds between Mission and McNary Wildlife Nature Area. **Dolly Robison** counted birds in the Hermiston and Stanfield areas.

**Carolyn Featherston** checked for birds at her feeders on the North Hill in Pendleton and along the Pendleton River Walk (twice!). **June Whitten** tallied birds in SW Pendleton, McKay Creek NWR (**Duane** helped count birds at the refuge), Cold Springs Highway, and the Columbia River from Warehouse Beach Rec. Area to McNary Wildlife Nature Area. **Marilyn and Gene Cripe, Diana LaSarge, and Aaron Skirvin** (South County Crew) birded south of Pendleton to Pilot Rock, Battle Mountain State Park, Ukiah, and Vinson. **Tanya Harrison** checked her feeders on the Pendleton North Hill. The **Sallees (Sherry and Robert)** saw the female Anna's Hummingbird at their feeders near the Walla Walla River south of Milton-Freewater on Jan. 1 (it has been in their yard since mid November).

All totaled, we found 88 species of birds on New Year's Day. This is the highest number since we started the Winter Big Day on January 1, 2009. In 2009, we found 85 species, 78 in

2010, and 76 in 2011. Here are the species reported for January 1, 2012:

Canada Goose, Cackling Goose, Wood Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, Green-winged Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, American Wigeon, Cinnamon Teal, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, Lesser Scaup, Common Goldeneye, Barrow's Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, California Quail, Gray Partridge, Chukar, Wild Turkey, Ring-necked Pheasant, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Merlin, Prairie Falcon, Pied-billed Grebe, Western Grebe, Horned Grebe, Great Blue Heron, Black-crowned Night-Heron, American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Virginia Rail, American Coot, Ring-billed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Western Screech-Owl, Short-eared Owl, Anna's Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Shrike, Black-billed Magpie, Western Scrub-Jay, American Crow, Common Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, Mountain Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-breasted Nuthatch, Pacific (Winter) Wren, Marsh Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, European Starling, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Spotted Towhee, Song Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-winged Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, Brewer's Blackbird, Yellow-headed



*A very cold female Anna's Hummingbird.  
Photo by Sherry Sallee, 1/19/12*



*Red-breasted Merganser. Photo by Jiri Bohdal.*





Blackbird, House Finch, Cassin's Finch, Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, House Sparrow.

There were some rare to uncommon birds observed during the Big Day; here are some highlights. To my knowledge, this is the first winter record of Cinnamon Teal in Umatilla County. June Whitten spotted a female **Red-breasted Merganser** at Warehouse Beach Recreation Area along the Columbia River. Red-breasted Merganser is a rare, annual fall and winter visitor in Umatilla County (even rarer in spring migration). We missed this species in 2011. The Columbia River crews (Neal Hinds, George and Leanne Ruby, June Whitten, and Nancy and Lyle Brown) all saw a few **American White Pelicans** on the Columbia River near McNary Dam. A few pelicans are reliable near the dam this time of year, but Dolly Robison saw 3 pelicans along the Umatilla River near the Hwy 207 bridge. In winter, the pelicans usually don't come upstream on the Umatilla any farther than Three Mile Dam.

**Ruddy Ducks** are very rare locally in winter, thus Neal Hinds' and the Ruby's sightings in the vicinity of McNary Wildlife Nature Area are noteworthy. **Barrow's Goldeneye** and **Eurasian Wigeon** can be very difficult to find, but Neal managed to find each of these species on the Columbia River. A highlight of the day for the South County Crew was a large, female **Merlin** in Pilot Rock. Other highlights were two separate **Golden Eagles** (one adult and one first year) along Hwy 395 in Jack Canyon. A flock of **Chukars** (E. Birch Creek Road) and a flock of **Gray Partridges** (1/2 mile S of Nye Jct.) made showings, too.

Talk about getting lucky, Tanya Harrison woke up in the wee hours of New Year's Day and realized she hadn't filled her bird feeders. She got up, went outside with bird seed and heard a calling **Western Screech-Owl** in the tree in her yard! This species is fairly common throughout the year in Umatilla County, but they can be difficult to find in winter. The South County Crew found 2 **Barn Owls**: one in

the sanding shed at Nye Jct. and the other in the old Doherty barn along Gurdane Road. The "Barn Owl crevice" along Hwy 395 just west of Pilot Rock was occupied by a **Great Horned Owl**, which must have evicted (or maybe eaten) the Barn Owls. The South County Crew also spotted 2 **Short-eared Owls** perched on fence posts along Hwy 74 just a mile from Nye Jct.

The Rubys saw the only **Pileated Woodpecker** of the day; it was just south of the Mission Market. Carolyn Featherston found a **Pacific (Winter) Wren** along the River Walk in Pendleton. This species is a rare to uncommon, year-round resident in Umatilla County and very difficult to find in winter. Carolyn also found the only **Cassin's Finches**, which are very uncommon in winter. By all reports, the few **Western Scrub-Jays** that reside in Umatilla County were mostly hiding from birders on New Year's Day. But, Neal Hinds managed to find this species in the McNary area.



*Gray Partridge. Photo by Aaron Skirvin.*

Surprisingly, just 3 groups (Colleen Hewes, the Rubys, and the South County Crew) reported **Western Meadowlarks**. Meadowlarks must be scarce in the NW section of the county. A few **Hermit Thrushes** (Neal Hinds) and **Marsh Wrens** (June Whitten) spend the winter in the county but are hard to find. So, these species always make a good addition to the winter bird list.

Thank you to all who participated; the weather cooperated too (unlike the weather during the CBC two days earlier!), making it a great day for winter birding. Maybe next year we will make our goal of 100 species on January 1, a difficult task no doubt, but we can always be hopeful.

*By Aaron Skirvin*



## Keep the Nectar Flowing!

**N**OW THAT Anna's Hummingbirds are showing up more frequently in Umatilla County in fall and winter, feeding them during the winter can be easier than you think! Thanks to two Northwest inventors, there are options available to prevent the nectar from freezing. Check out [www.backyardbirdshop.com](http://www.backyardbirdshop.com). This educational and informative web site is provided by an Oregon company, The Backyard Bird Shop, with six stores in the Portland area. They do not sell "on-line", but will send packages from their main office and would love to see you in person at one of their stores! The Hummingbird Feeder Heater and the Hummingbird Feeder Cozies are very attractive and easy to use.

If you have questions about any of their products, they can best serve you by phone. Give the folks at Backyard Bird Shop a call at 503-626-0949.

*By Marilyn Cripe*

## December/January Bird Sightings

**L**OTS OF BIRDING ACTION took place during this report period, which included the Christmas Bird Count and the January 1, 2012 Umatilla County Big Day. Check the results for each of these events in separate newsletter articles.

December 20, Tanya Harrison completed the Hermiston raptor survey. Her totals included 50 **Red-tailed Hawks**, 41

**American Kestrels**, 5 **Northern Harriers**, 5 **Bald Eagles**, 4 **Rough-legged Hawks**, 2 **Prairie Falcons** and one **Great Horned Owl**. This survey,

which is conducted each month during the winter, covers the western portion of the county including the Reith, Echo and Hermiston area.

Also on December 20, Nancy Brown had quite a treat when she discovered a new life bird at her Hermiston feeder. Nancy identified it as a **COMMON REDPOLL**, a winter visitor seldom found in the county. Nancy also reports she has up to 10 **Eurasian**



*Bird Sightings*

**Collared-Doves** visiting her feeder at one time as well as more than **40 Pine Siskins**. The same day Jack Simons flushed **12 Wood Ducks** from the pond behind his home between Pendleton and Mission. Jack notes this is the largest number of **Wood Ducks** he has seen on this pond since he moved here and commented it was quite a sight to see these beautiful ducks rocket into the air in full sunlight. Not to be outdone, Jack's wife Sharon spotted a **Pied-billed Grebe** foraging in the Umatilla River opposite Mission ponds the same day. This was the first time Jack had seen this grebe species in the river, obviously there because Mission ponds were frozen.

December 24, Russ Namitz, a birder from Coos Bay, found a **Pacific Loon** and **Thayer's Gull** below the McNary Dam. Checking Mission Ponds on Decem-



*Long-tailed Duck. Photo from Wikipedia.org.*

ber 31, Jack spotted a **Ruddy Duck** lounging on the big pond. Jack said this is the first time he has seen this species on the ponds during the winter.

Follow up after the January 1 Winter Big Day, on January 2, Aaron Skirvin (Aaron), June Whitten (June) and Diana LaSarge (Diana) added the following birds to the Umatilla County year list: a **Burrowing Owl** and a **Loggerhead Shrike** at the Umatilla Chemical Depot, a **Wilson's Snipe** and **Great Egret** along Stage Gulch Creek in Stanfield (Aaron notes the snipe was actually swimming across the creek, first time he ever saw a **Wilson's Snipe** swimming) and a **Brown-headed Cowbird** along the Stanfield Meadows Road.

Katrina Susi found the year's first **Canvasback** at McNary Wildlife Nature Area on January 3. On January 6, Tanya Harrison saw a **Ferruginous Hawk**





in a field on Tutuilla Flats. Aaron notes that **Ferruginous Hawks** are rarely found in the county during the winter months.

Neal Hinds discovered an immature male **LONG-TAILED DUCK** on the Columbia River just below McNary Dam January 7. Neal's sighting is only the 9<sup>th</sup> record of this species in Umatilla County. Neal also refound the male **Eurasian Wigeon** that has been wintering on the Columbia River just below McNary Dam (and on the ponds at McNary Wildlife Nature Area). Aaron drove to the river and with Neal's help was able to spot the **LONG-TAILED DUCK** and **Eurasian Wigeon**. While there, Aaron also spotted a **Pacific Loon** and a pair of **Red-breasted Mergansers**. In addition to the ducks, Neal reported finding a **Townsend's Solitaire** at the McNary Wildlife Nature Area, the first report of this species in Umatilla County this year.

Carolyn Featherston, Colleen Hewes, Marilyn Cripe and June spent the day birding in the western part of the county on January 11. They were able to find 37 species including a male **Northern Pintail** at McNary Wildlife Nature Area, a new year-bird for the county.

January 10, Connie Betts reported there were **12 Eurasian Collared-Doves** in the trees behind her home near the Pendleton Community Park. The following day she saw **2 Northern Flickers** and one **Eurasian Collared-Dove** in her yard.

Joy Jaeger reported that she and Steve were able to visit their mountain cabin above Albee on January 13. Joy reported that this is the first time they were able to get to the cabin in

January and there was less snow than they found in November. Joy's bird sightings included: **Red Crossbills, Cassin's Finches, Mountain Chickadees, Pygmy** and **White-breasted Nuthatches** as well as **Clark's Nutcrackers** and a pair of **Common Ravens**.



*Red-throated Loon. Photo by Aaron Skirvin.*

January 14, Neal Hinds was able to photograph **4 Tundra Swans** at the McNary Nature Wildlife Area. He also noted the **Pacific Loon** was still present as was the **Eurasian Wigeon** and the pair of **Red-breasted Mergansers**. However, he was unable to relocate the **LONG-TAILED DUCK**.

On the way from Pendleton to the Columbia River via Hwy 37 on January 15, Aaron and Diana found a **Loggerhead Shrike** along Hartle Road about 2 miles from Hwy 37. They were excited to find a first-year **RED-THROATED**

**LOON** in the Columbia River just upstream from the Sand Station Recreation Area on January 15. Aaron notes this is only the third record for **RED-THROATED LOON** in Umatilla County, all found on the Columbia River in the fall or winter. They also relocated the male **LONG-TAILED DUCK** and a male **Barrow's Goldeneye** just below McNary Dam.

The same day, Jay Withgott and his wife Susan (birders from Portland) did some birding in the McNary area. They were able to spot the **Pacific Loon** reported earlier as well as an **Eared Grebe** and **Western Gull**. Some of their other sighting included **16 American White Pelicans, 9 Black-crowned Night-Herons, 12 species of ducks including 6 Redheads and 2 Barrow's Goldeneye, one Western Scrub-Jay and a Townsend's Solitaire.**



*American and Lesser Goldfinches at the feeder of our Field Sightings Editor, Dave Herr.*

**Goldeneye, one Western Scrub-Jay and a Townsend's Solitaire.**



When the freezing rain and snow started January 15, activity at my (Dave Herr) bird feeders really picked up. Along with over 75 **American Goldfinches**, I've had up to 10 **Lesser Goldfinches** at my thistle feeders on Mount Hebron in NE Pendleton.

Sherry and Robert Sallee, who live along the Walla Walla River a few miles south of Milton-Freewater, have been seeing the female **Anna's Hummingbird** visiting their hummingbird feeder daily throughout this reporting period. The hummingbird first showed up at their feeder in November.

It looks like winter has finally arrived and will be fun to see if any new species are found in the county

during the next month. Please send all your sightings to me, Dave Herr at [dsherr1@mac.com](mailto:dsherr1@mac.com) or call 541-276-6413.

**Newsletter Editor: Barbara Clark, 541 278-1252**

**Email Address: [bainbrid@gmail.com](mailto:bainbrid@gmail.com)**

**Technical Editor: Aaron Skirvin, 541 215-0761**

**Email Address: [umatbirder@yahoo.com](mailto:umatbirder@yahoo.com)**

**Field Sightings Editor: Dave Herr, 541 276-6413**

**Email Address: [dsherr1@mac.com](mailto:dsherr1@mac.com)**

**Photo Editor: Jack Simons, 541 276-8566**

**Email Address: [styletoil@eoni.com](mailto:styletoil@eoni.com)**



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Pendleton Bird Club  
Pendleton, OR 97801

